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Genesis 37:19 *And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.*

To Babs

1

Giovanni was a dreamer, there was no doubt about that. Just over ten years after the Second World War had ended, he was born into this world in one of the original houses in the old village.

However, now that he was retired, Giovanni, and his daughter Chiara, moved from there into an outhouse further out in the country, up near the farm.

The original villagers had always been mystified by him. They could see that, unlike all others, Giovanni had never thought about getting older. He was the same now as he had been way back then. This was very strange indeed.

To strangers who came and went from the village, Giovanni was completely unbelievable. When they met him for the first time, they liked him though thought him odd.

Everyone who met Giovanni could see he was different from all others. His spirit overwhelmed the sceptic, and his outlook they could see went way beyond where any adventurer would go. It was natural people thought him odd.

He may have been retired now, for over ten years, but Giovanni was still enthusiastic about life. He was young in his spirit, and always pleased to meet everyone when he came across them. This was strange; for due to media overload the world had become a very scary place indeed. Someone with a spirit, beautiful and free was a rare thing indeed to see.

Giovanni liked to rise early in the morning, and after prayers he always had a nice breakfast, along with his daughter Chiara. Then he would read for a time, before he got ready to go out into the country.

As they sat down together in the living room this morning, he wondered: “The dream of life is for those who believe in love. I wonder what dreams my dear will unfold for us today.”

Giovanni may not have been given the gift of prophesy, but he loved wandering around the countryside he knew so well.

“Thinking and dreaming is my thing, you know Chiara,” is how he often put it to his daughter.

As they both tucked into breakfast this morning, he reminded her about the way to live life: “The dream of life is worth more than pieces of gold - never forget that.”

His daughter of course laughed; for Giovanni was always making great statements like this and warning her about the ways of the world.

Indeed, he reaffirmed this just a few moments later: “Chiara, you know people who have no dreams are dead to life. You must hold on to your dreams,. Never give them away to anyone.”

Chiara teased him back: “I will try not to.”

“You know when I was your age, I noticed that the majority of people were chasing after crazy things in life. This usually involved money, prestige, or power. These things I guess they thought would give them status within society. Even though we are in the computer age now, the dream of life is still integral to happiness. Nothing is new under the sun. Do you know where that comes from?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Dreamers are never dull. The dreamer sees everything in life as new, and it is the potential of sharing the dream of life is what makes you alive. If you are a dreamer, you are indeed lucky to be one.”

2

Many in the village knew about the tragedy: Giovanni's wife passed away just two years after they had been married. Of course, he was upset, but he soon got over it and embraced life in a way very few could understand.

His daughter Chiara - fully grown now - was a blessing to him. Now grown up, she too followed the dream of life. This year Chiara had started college, and everyone who looked her way could see that she was a happy carefree girl making her way out into the world.

Giovanni was a loving father, and she loved him dearly. Chiara's main interest was in art; her line was good, and Giovanni could see her paintings were starting to come together.

It was natural Chiara was always talking about art to him. She updated him once again, as they sat together at breakfast: “You know, all the creatures I paint come from the ancient world,” and after picking up the sauce bottle, she told him more about her ongoing project at college: “The vision I have is not from the modern world. The mythical creatures I draw may not be real, but they are very much part of my imagination.”

“It is a good subject, Chiara, you have chosen; for we are living in a time that has become Orwellian. To escape the control of others, you must always follow the dream of life.”

Anyone listening in to that conversation would have agreed with that. It was well known in the time they were living that governments all over Europe had grabbed power through technology, and had subdued citizens by shutting down free speech and free expression. The fascists may have been defeated in World War Two, but their philosophy had risen again in the digital era. Many journalists and writers who had flagged this up had ended up in prison, for expressing their opinions.

“This is not the end-times, but it is not a good time. Remember that Chiara.”

“I know dad, but I can’t understand why my fellow students are not protesting against it. Why are they so passive?”

Giovanni nodded. It was true what she said, was it not. You hardly heard a dissenting voice these days from the young or the old. In fact, that was the reason he had come out of the village, and gave up the old family home

there. As soon as the outhouse, next to the farm way out in the country, went up for sale, he bought it.

Giovanni was not going to become part of the new digital class living among digital people. He could see that the rural areas like the one where he had been born had become a phantom zone. It had been a slow transition, but it was a fact. It was now a place where village life thrived no more. He could see no one got involved with any local issues nowadays. It was like living in a foreign land with foreign representatives representing you. The elected members were anonymous. No one knew who they were, or what they did. The villagers for help now searched the Internet thinking they could get answers there, and in so doing they gave up on real life, and moreover real conversations about the place where they lived with others became a thing of the past.

There was no doubt about it, people were looking inwards in the time they were living in. The other thing that was happening now was that many citizens were sending reports to the state about their neighbours. This was at an all time high. Of course, it was so easy now to snitch on someone these days: ping an email, or write a poisoned text, press a button and it was delivered.

3

Far out in the outhouse in the country, next to the farm, no one could annoy Giovanni and his daughter Chiara. This was a blessing. They were happy there. However, he knew people could certainly report him even though he had moved far from the madding crowd. It was wonderful that he got this place; for they could not annoy him anymore by destroying the village life all around him.

Yes, this was indeed a strange time to live in. The liberal elite were complaining about everything and anything these days. If you did not end up in court after expressing an opinion, or writing a comment on line, you were lucky indeed. Protesting about anything was frowned

upon in the new digital era. Sometimes the complainer would phone or send you a warning letter beforehand telling you to stop expressing your opinions. Who these people were working for was very interesting indeed.

Even in his formative years, when he left the village to work abroad, Giovanni did not change. He was forever telling others about the dream of life, and he was still doing it today: “This is the only way to escape the Dream Killers,” was how he put it to them.

“You are mad,” they would say and laugh at him.

At the time, when working abroad, he kept the house on in the village and only came back when his daughter was born. However, recently he noticed, not like before, people were now in this time of repression openly suspicious even hostile towards dreamers. Of course, the majority were ignorant of what they were doing. Many of them in fact turned on their neighbours in fear of themselves losing their minds.

Constant news feeds about people being charged as to what they were saying towards others had them living in perpetual fear. It was as if at any moment your front door could be knocked, or even worse kicked in by the ‘Peeping Plods’, as they were called these days. The aforementioned had all the tech gear at hand. They went through your Internet life before your very eyes. One or two brave souls popped their heads above their computers and cried freedom, and openly criticised those in power for what they were doing, but in general this was a fearful time for free speech. One local prophet called it ‘the end-times’, another ‘a time of complete oppression’.

“Chiara, we are safe here far out in the country, away from all the nonsense,” Giovanni said to her, as he picked up his cup of tea, “Whatever you do and wherever you go, just make sure you avoid the Dream Killers.”

“Oh, stop it dad. I don’t use social media anymore. My friends and I only speak to each other in realtime now. We know no one is safe online these days.”

Yes, indeed, for whatever reason the strangest people had aligned themselves to local government officials, foreign states and rogue actors. There was no doubt about it, this was a dark era for those who wanted to express their opinions on a computer, or even on the street.

Retired now, Giovanni for most of the day spent his time walking through the country side looking at the trees, the birds, and all the animals that came and went down by the river. To him it was a wonderful thing just to observe the changes throughout the different seasons of the year. Even though he knew this part of the country like the back of his hand, every day there was a surprise in store waiting for him, like the hare crossing the road yesterday up at the mill.

“Chiara, you should have seen how funny it looked. I thought he was taking the Micky out of me the way he was ambling along…”

However, today Giovanni was not roaming about down by the dam, or along by the river. No, this was Monday and every Monday, Giovanni went into town on the bus with his daughter Chiara. They always did this at the beginning of the week. It was a lovely thing to share

the journey with each other into town. They both looked forward to it.

4

When the old clock on the mantle piece signalled that it was 9am, they both left the outhouse to catch the 9:20 bus to the city of Glasgow at the bottom of the country road.

As usual, Chiara was carrying her shoulder bag, she took with her everywhere she went. Inside were her precious paints, crayons, pencils and pens.

Giovanni spent one day a week in town wandering around the shops. Of course, he had done this since he was a boy, and he used to go in most days of the week when he was working there. Now it was only one day a week, and on a Monday. The only thing he took with him was a large plastic bag folded up in his pocket. This was for buying

provisions. There was always something needed at the outhouse that could not be got online, or at the local shop in the old village.

Giovanni carried no phone or computer with him now his working days were over. His only contact with the outside world was with those who he met on a Monday going to and from the city.

As they walked along down the country path together, Giovanni glanced towards the main road over the newly cut hedge. He was struck by how society had changed so much.

“In every object there is a story,” he told her. “The sparrows can’t nest here anymore; for the hydraulic machine the farmer uses to cut the hedge has chopped it down too far, and this has destroyed their natural habitation.” And as he looked over the hedge towards the main road he lamented once more about how obscene it all was: “Look bumper to bumper both ways. It reminds me of going to Gatwick airport, just outside London. You know when I was a boy hardly a car went up that road.”

Chiara smiled as she let go of his arm. This was to fix her shoulder strap of her bag; for it had twisted. Once done, she said: “But at least when you were young people could speak openly about how they saw the world around them - now everyone is scared to open their mouths about what they see and hear.”

“Yes, indeed how times have changed, my dear. Nowadays people are frightened to express themselves, and that is a sign like no other that the state has become oppressive. As you know, today many run to them to

prosecute others at the drop of a hat. Some opinion, written, or something that has been said to them, or about them, they see as an offence. You hear about it all the time."

Giovanni could see a profound difference in the culture from when he was Chiara's age. He sighed as he looked back from the busy road: "I notice that artists on the street in the city now sing tragic ballads in remembrance of lost time, as well as sad love songs to passers by. I may only be there once a week now, but I know most of their songs off by heart. Yes, you are right Chiara: nobody is revolutionary anymore. There is a great dark cloud hanging over our country. Wherever you go you can feel the oppression against citizens around you from unseen forces from afar."

Chiara smiled at him as she took his arm again. She knew what he was like and agreed with him: "It is shocking isn't."

"Indeed it is. Remember only dreamers can escape in a time of persecution, or as one diplomat put it online the other day: limited freedom due to world events."

That made her laugh. Chiara had come to the conclusion that the majority of her fellow students were happy to go along with living in an oppressed country. They had become used to the directives of what they call the liberal elite.

Giovanni mimicked the aforementioned:

"Oh, you can't say that."

"You will get into trouble, you know."

"You can't speak about things like that now."

“Don’t you know, you will end up getting arrested if you say such things.”

He had mentioned these outburst before; they were commonplace now. If truth be told Chiara knew her fellow students at the college had become depressed, and were now resigned to living in a world of state oppression.

However, Chiara was not of that mind. She knew she could say anything to a friend. She may have only one friend at the college, but that was enough. Many of her fellow student she reckoned had in fact never been interested in pursuing anything outwith the world view promoted by the liberal elite, state actors, billionaire tech giants, and other political activists.

The idea of a sub culture, or radical thinking, was alien to her fellow students. Like many students at this time they were afeared of speaking to each other as to what was on their minds. Some students were sceptical about what was happening around them, but few had made the great leap of faith to freedom yet.

Giovanni knew how hard it was for young people in any age. His solution was simple though: “Only dreamers can escape the Dream Killers in life,” and this he told her and others.

He knew that what had happened was due to many political factors - especially the shutdown of society during the pandemic they called Covid. With only limited freedom on offer, many had accepted what the liberal elite proclaimed. This led them into the arms of those who influenced the policy makers. What came of this was a philosophy of appeasement.

The recommendation was very simple. The liberal elite proclaimed: you have not to be upset about the changes within society. Nice people have nothing to fear. They get on well in life. Just enjoy yourselves - nothing will happened to you, that was the general idea.

Chiara was such a lovely innocent girl. Giovanni every day gave thanks that his daughter, like him, followed the dream of life. He knew by doing this that she would not be controlled by the tech giants and their acolytes.

Giovanni always looked forward to a Monday; for this was the day when they would both travel on the bus into the city together. This trip, one day a week, suited him. Now that he was retired, he liked to start off the week by going away early in the morning and be back after lunch. There were many places he liked to visit: old haunts as well as new places that had sprung up after the city had been devastated by the plague.

Certainly, Giovanni knew there had been great changes in his lifetime. It was the history of the city he found interesting though. The second city of the empire from where once goods came into from the colonies had developed into an industrial powerhouse. Thereafter, it had morphed into a pan European self service city for the pleasure for tourists and inhabitants alike. Now it was trying hard to reinvent itself again, but there were no clear signs as to where it was going at this time. This was very interesting to him.

The art college Chiara was attending was right at the top end of town not far from the main theatre where large opera productions were put on every month. Every

morning she had to be there for 10 am. Chiara was halfway through her first term. So it was once more off down the country path to catch the bus at the bottom of the road.

“Chiara, we have plenty time. Let’s stop when we get to the bridge and see if the cuckoo has nested this year again by the mill.”

Chiara was interested in nature, but this morning she seemed distracted. Inside or outside of college, she was forever asking others questions about life. There was little chance or opportunity in the community to do that now. This was due again to the state grabbing total control after the Covid pandemic. This oppression, the young felt it worst of all.

Giovanni could see what was going on. He was happy they had moved away from the village. It had once been a lovely country place where everyone knew each other. Back then people were free to interact and speak openly. Not anymore. The joke going about was: “It’s not as bad as you think it is - it’s worse.”

The reason for that was simple: the state could now intrude in people’s lives whenever they wanted too. Due to powerful computers many in the state had been corrupted into thinking they had total control and power over, not just citizens, but other nation states too. Above all things the dream of life fascinated Giovanni, and mercifully this had rubbed off on his daughter Chiara.

Even if it was wet on a Monday morning, on foot off they would go together down the winding path towards the main road. Although, it was still early this morning, the sun was out and the temperature was mild. It was May

after all. Even the greatest boor in the village knew this was a lovely walk along the country road from the outhouse to catch the bus. As they walked along, Giovanni and Chiara were happy to be where they were, in each other's company.

Although not living in the village anymore, they acted the same as before. They both smiled and said good morning to any passersby, either going up to the farm, or further on to wherever. Giovanni was a little unsteady now, but apart from that he was fine.

Just as they reached the bridge a beautiful bird flew under it. The spectacular colour of it caught Giovanni's eye: "Look Chiara a kingfisher!" and they ran to the bridge to follow it.

The beautiful moment flew by all to quickly, and the small bird disappeared, somewhere down stream. Once out of sight, Giovanni proclaimed before they left to cross the bridge to the main road: "Well, that makes up for not hearing the cuckoo."

5

In good time they were at the bus stop. This was important; for the bus was now every hour from the outlying village where the terminus was. This change happened after the pandemic; before that it had been every half an hour. When it arrived they took their seats inside, where the prams and buggies were sometimes parked.

The small collection of passengers downstairs, who had got on at the village before, all looked over at them as they sat down. The reason for that was simple: everyone could see how happy they looked. There were not many happy people about these days, due to the oppression of

Woke folk and the liberal elite. Coupled with the fact country people out in this area were still suspicious of others, even those from a neighbouring village. Distrust of outsiders went way back to bygone times, when incomers would try to infiltrate a local community to take their goods and families away.

Chiara loved to talk to her dad in private and in public. It mattered not to her where they were. In private they shared their most intimate thoughts together, about their dreams and aspirations. At night they told each other stories as they played dominos, before going off to bed. In public Chiara was a touch theatrical, but Giovanni did not fault her for that. She was young and, like all others her age, liked to express herself.

“The inner is the outer, and the outer is the inner,” she was always telling him. “What I say is worth portraying.”

After the bus driver scanned the elderly woman’s bus pass, the bus moved off. Chiara wanted to have some fun. Taking on the role of a journalist, she started asking him questions: “Have you always been a dreamer?”

As if being the grand old man of the time, Giovanni played along: “My dear, I have never forgotten the child inside me.”

“Even when you were my age, working in the city, you were a dreamer, way back then?”

“Yes, all my life, I have been a dreamer.”

“What was your first job?”

“My first job was in town with an electronics company. I was never quite sure who owned them, or

moreover who their customers were, but they were the ones who took me on."

"What did you do, there?"

"As a lad, I was in the delivery room. I delivered the parcels every day to the different departments. I had also to deal with requests for orders and inquiries for the doll they were developing."

"What type of doll were they selling?"

"A blown up doll!"

"What!"

"Chatelaine, is what they called her."

"That's an unusual name."

"Yes, quite. It was the first one of its kind on sale in the UK. When a customer posted a request enquiring about this '*revolutionary lover*', as she was called, I would have to send out a lovely colourful brochure to them. Many wrote back, or phoned in, after receiving the brochure, and many clients placed an order for the doll right away. Such was the fervour of the time for 'the first dream doll,' as they called her."

"Were there never any problems with the doll?"

"Not technically, but many women's groups were up in arms against it. Their men they said were paying too much attention to Chatelaine."

"Chatelaine caused problems, did she?"

"She did indeed. In fact, now that I think about it, I remember one time some activists came along and spray painted graffiti outside our building saying: Chatelaine is not a dream doll at all. No, she is a Dream Killer."

“Ah, so this is when you came to hear about the Dream Killers.”

“I knew about the dark side of life before that. Even when I was young, I could see there were people who let’s say were not what they pretended to be. Yes, thereafter, I used that name to identify those who were against the dream of life.”

“So the protest made an impression on you?”

“Very much so. Every day listening to the technicians, I knew how the company enticed people to interact with it. They were so clever they could read the signs of both men and women and answer their questions accordingly. Many male clients who bought it soon became addicted to it, as did some women. Knowing the death of life is the death of dreams, I sympathised with the protesters.”

“Is that why you left the company?”

“Mercifully, I got a job offer from an advertising agency on the same street. I did not hang about; I took up the position the following month. and it was in this industry that I worked up until I retired.”

“You were lucky.”

“Oh, I give thanks for that. I had a great career in advertising. I think I have told you, I opened several agencies thereafter all over the world, as far as India, even China. That is how I made enough money to buy the outhouse we now live in.”

6

As the bus moved off, Giovanni looked out of the window up to the old outhouse, over the fields he knew so well. It was wonderful. Even though he knew this area, every day he found new adventures around those fields, hidden paths, and scenic walkways along by the river. Giovanni loved to wander about thinking about all sorts of things; he did this by dreaming about life. Chiara smiled to herself for she knew there was nothing better for him to do than to be outside in the country.

Many years ago Giovanni had met his wife in a place called Bagni di Lucca in Italy, and brought her back home here with him to Scotland. They had a whirlwind romance,

a happy marriage, and a lovely young daughter. It is true to say that in the modern era not everyone who married stayed married, and not everyone who cohabited remained cohabited.

Through this lovely countryside, the bus seemed to glide between the fields. His young daughter, as soon as the bus stopped at the next stop, asked him in a quiet voice: “What was it like here before the foreigners came?”

“Well, for one thing, everyone knew each other.”

“Were the buses full back then?”

“Yes, indeed they were. When I started working in the city, I was about your age, most folks used the bus, the only cars on the road back then were company cars driven by rich folk, reps, managers, mostly going to and from the city.”

“I read that after the war people were suspicious of foreigners. Did that carry on into your generation?”

“It did. However, a dramatic change came - though no one could see it at that time - when the country joined the European superstate. We did not know back then that this would wipe away our culture completely.”

“How do you mean?”

“The European project’s raison d’etre was that everything in every state would be the same. No one at the outset knew that the commission was unaccountable. Citizens could not change anything; for the European Parliament was completely undemocratic.”

“Is that why people voted for Brexit, to get out of the superstate?”

“Absolutely.”

“Did you vote for it?”

“Oh, I can’t remember, then as now, I wasn’t passionate about politics.”

“Why have communities not formed again here in our land?”

“Well, the country was fundamentally changed. During the time when we were in the union, councils here followed the superstate model and the way they did things. They enlarged their burghs, and they too became unaccountable. In so doing they destroyed all the villages near and far. Citizens lost their voice to shape their own area. They could no longer protect themselves. Villagers no longer had a say in how the local village was run. All the decisions were taken far away from them, and that remains the same today, even though we have left the European superstate.”

“Why is that?”

“Well like I say, they had expanded the burghs and those who came to serve as the local representatives after Brexit in our country were not from within the village. The bourgeoisie representatives kept their distance from the villagers. People saw this and they too became distant from each other. Many just lived their lives online, or watched television. Today half the population live alone not with a blown up doll these days, but an AI app as a companion for them to chat to.”

“Is that why we moved out of the village and bought the outhouse, by the farm?

“Oh, it was a blessing, I tell you. The spirit is gone from the old village where I was born. With no

community, there is no point of being part of it. Giovanni laughed: “We fled to the hills, and took our dreams with us.”

“No, I understand. I prefer the old outhouse,” Chiara quietly reflected, as she nodded to herself.

Giovanni was pleased to hear that: “When I was your age, I mixed in with others, but it soon became apparent that their ways were not my ways. After a time they became strange to me. They followed rules and regulations that to me seemed ludicrous, and not only that, they wanted to show others they were good people because of what they were doing. Going round in a circle was not for me. People like you to worry about what is happening in the world - that to me is daft.”

Chiara nodded again in agreement with him, then continued her interview: “So, that is why you became a dreamer?”

“Yes, dreamers live within an endless dream. Life is beautiful for those who dream, that much I know. Anyway, enough of that. How is college going?”

“All right, I suppose. Some of the art students are strange though.”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s as if they have no sense of freedom. They pretend to have a free spirit, but most of them follow others who are following others who are themselves following others…”

“All of them?”

“Well the majority, as far as I can see.”

“What impresses them to do that?”

“Oh, the usual things. The big thing at the moment is about following end-time gurus, and mystic influencers on the Internet.”

“Do you have a best friend at college, Chiara?”

“No, I don’t need one.”

“Mary is a good friend though, is she not?”

“Yes, we get on well.”

“I am like you; I follow the dream of life.”

Giovanni smiled to himself; for he knew that the Dream Killers would not get near to his daughter.

Giovanni understood more than most that the majority of people in life do not come close to each other, and he said as much. “Yes, it is the way it is. Only dreamers inhabit the same dream. Having said that I still find it interesting though the way people act together. Life is completely superficial for the masses. What I have always done is live life in the present, and do not do what others do. Once you declare yourself as a dreamer, people will think you strange.”

Giovanni said this in a matter of fact tone to his daughter before adding: “If they know you are a dreamer they won’t believe what you say; for as you know in the real world everything is horrible,” and they both laughed.

Everyone on the bus could see father and daughter had a connection way beyond the family tie, and were having great fun together.

“That’s the two dreamers from the outhouse,” whispered a local woman on the bus.

Her companion, older and greyer than she was, had more emotion in her voice when she replied: “Oh, I have

heard about them. They say he is strange that one, right enough, who bought the outhouse near the mill."

Most of the folks on the bus hardly looked at them. As the bus made its way to the city, their stoney faces hid their secret thoughts. This scene did not look out of place; for many were scared now to speak openly to others in public. On the other hand most travellers in this area, to put it diplomatically, looked glum.

Was it any wonder locals were suspicious of those who travelled along this bus route with them. Just by looking outside of the bus, you could see there were so many displaced folk from all over the world wandering around these days. Refugees, foreign migrants, and others, from the city came to the country in search of something. Goodness knows where they were going to.

In the great scheme of things in the time they were living, fear of the stranger was understandable; for it was well known private companies were tracking the daily movements of citizens via modern devices like computers and phones. It was also well known that the data gathered by those agencies could in turn be sold to others in cahoots with them.

Just recently one political guru warned that dreamers were the most dangerous people in the state. He said this to another blogger on social media just the other day. "Those dreamers you see going about, living in another world, think they can avoid our technology."

7

“Who is that man that always sits at the back of the bus?” Chiara asked him in a low voice, as she looked left over her shoulder towards him: “He is always there?

“Ah, our friend is with us again is he. Yes, I believe that man works for a government agency called MOAN.”

“What does that stand for.”

“Monitoring of Artists Nationwide.”

Chiara laughed, then said scathingly: “He no doubt reports on you as well as me.”

“You bet he does; for that is what he is paid to do.”

“Creep.”

“Don’t let that worry you.”

Sitting inside the door on the seats on the bus that faced each other, it was easy for Giovanni and Chiara, without intruding upon them, to glance at those beside them.

“Yes, the official who is contracted by the state to keep an eye on all possible aliens, as you observed, always likes to sit at the back of the bus.”

Like her dad Chiara could read people pretty quickly. She observed: “That’s true every morning the weirdo sits there pretending to read his free morning newspaper.”

It was obvious to her that the snitch was the type of human who pretended not to be interested in what was going on around him, at the same time as taking everything in. Giovanni knew those who monitored others had a certain way with them. The man in the dark clothes, baseball hat, and sneaker shoes, was definitely an informer.

“I wonder where is he from?” Chiara asked herself.

“I think he comes from one of the outlaying villages.”

“You know, one time he followed me into the college in town.”

“Don’t let that worry you. It is the way it is at the moment. They have nothing better to do with their time. Agents are all over the place keeping an eye on everyone - especially those who look happy.”

“Do you think they are watching us up at the outhouse.

“Probably.”

“How do they do that?

“Joggers, walkers, postmen, birdwatchers.”

“I see.”

“Don’t forget Chiara when you are at college and you use a computer, you will be monitored there too, but don’t worry about it, just be mindful about what is happening.”

“I don’t use any computer in the college. I use my phone.”

“Don’t forget the Dream Killers are everywhere in life.”

“But what is it that they are after?”

“Information.”

“And when they get the information what do they do with it?”

“They sell it on to others.”

“What use is that to them?”

“Well, someone may dislike you and buy the info from them about you, and try and use it against you. More often than not they just wait until something happens to you then they try and kill the dream of life inside of you.”

“Is that why you have always warned me against the Dream Killers?”

“Yes.”

“Always remember, it is not dreamers they worry about, it is the dream they are afraid of?”

“I don’t understand.”

“They tolerate dreams they hear of a certain kind: like winning lots of money, becoming famous, or about becoming an important person in life, having lots of friends, becoming a star. That sort of thing”

“What do they not allow.”

“They do not like it when you dream of freedom.”

“Why not?”

“In life those who want to control others dreams are dangerous. Freedom is something they cannot control or even understand.”

“So, that is why they want to kill the dream of life inside you.”

“Exactly.”

“When did this all come about? It seems to me that it has got to a new level.”

“It certainly has. It really became heightened after the Covid crisis: a totalitarian shutdown unprecedented in my lifetime. Consequently, they did not release everything back that they had grabbed from the people, and moreover they had more technology now to oppress citizens. The state got a taste of total power during the time of the pandemic. Thereafter, villagers now had no defence; for they had no representation. What followed, with no local representation, freedom disappeared, along with it local communities. You only have freedom in the state if you have representation. What happened was citizens felt isolated, and from that point on they were vulnerable, and kowtowed to the new totalitarian regime. Without a fight they lost the freedoms we fought for during the war. Woke people started to run the political agenda, and shutdown free speech.”

Chiara nodded, then said: “I watched something about that recently in a documentary on YouTube. It said that without a community, the individual is alone, and that is the reason people have put their trust in the Internet. The documentary maintained society was now run by the

tech giants, so in effect when they did that they were controlled by those running it. Then it went onto a discussion about why the UK left the European union. Why did we leave the union?"

"Well, the reason for that Chiara, as I have said, citizens thought they could get their voice back, but as you can see after we came out of the superstate things had completely changed. With no community in the local villages, they was no representation to redress the anomaly. It has been a dreadful time since the Covid crisis. You know that the majority who live in the old village have no interest in preserving village life anymore. They have accepted being controlled by others they don't know, who as you know have little or no interest in them."

"What about the church and schools? Was that the same for them?"

"Sadly people in the local village church had little or no interest in the takeover of village life. Like many others they soon became alienated from the building and from the teachings. Members hardly attended meetings, and if they did they sat quiet. Most of them followed those who said they were representing the state, as it rolled out a program on how citizens should live in the post Covid world. Meanwhile, with falling attendance the national church sold off a lot of the land it owned to try and recoup revenue. What had been given to the people in our area they could not see. The buyers cut down the trees, concreted over what they had bought and built what they wished anywhere and everywhere. On the other hand, I have got to say the teachers, some of them did show an

interest in the old village. However, pressure was soon put on them by the councillors, and they soon fell into line. The main problem was people born in the village failed to organise groups to protect themselves. They may have wanted to have a say in what was happening in their lives, but they were not brave enough to do that. And the ones who did protest where soon threaten by Woke laws, and made aware that if they kept on protesting where they would end up."

"Surely, there must have been someone who tried to stand up for the village?"

"Well, the ones who did stand up soon found the Peeping Plods at their door. The strange thing was how the villagers were taken in by the strangers who had come to our local area. Their ways were wonderful is what they use to say."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, I remember a business man came to the village, and not long after settling in he put his name forward to represent the villagers, as their representative. When he was campaigning some of the villagers said he was a good man."

"Why did they think that?"

"In the autumn they saw him sweeping leaves away from the road."

"What is wrong with that?"

"It was a pretence. As soon as he was elected, they never saw him do that again. In fact, come to think of it no one saw him again either."

Chiara laughed: "That figures."

“Others followed the same path, and took up their posts, then after a term they were never seen again either.”

“Was that the same for the church?”

“What happened there was those who came to this area followed the state. This was the greatest disaster in my living memory. The church was infiltrated by subversives. They brought with them all the Woke nonsense, along with New Age religion: both as you know are now promoted by the state.”

“So, that is how they killed off the dream of the local community?”

“Exactly Chiara, that is very precise of you to say that: for church and state have always been separate in our land. Now the state with a hold of the church, the dream of life, as you can see, became under threat; for the state do not promote anything other than the state. Therefore dreamers from that point of view were most definitely outlawed.”

“Is that why people in the village today look so unhappy?”

“Absolutely, the Dream Killers came here masquerading as friends, but as you can see they had their own agenda.”

“So, how can villagers protect themselves now?”

“They can’t. That is why I bought the outhouse in the country: coming out of the village, living apart from society, at least we are away from their influences. Even though village life has been destroyed, we must keep ongoing living here in the outhouse with our dreams intact. We have a place where we can dream. Once you

know about the dream of life you don't want to let it go, or have it killed off by some alien force."

"That's true," sighed Chiara, "But what if they imprison us."

"Keep on dreaming. The Dream Killers do not understand the dream of life. The dream of life will never die. The dream of life will always be full of love."

8

“I remember many years ago you telling me how to spot a Dream Killer.”

“Yes, it is very simple Chiara. They have no dreams to share with you, and moreover they cannot enter into the dream of life with you. They only talk about material things. And if you watch them you will see how they keep silent when others share their dreams with you. For some bizarre reason they think that this will help them learn how to kill off the dream of life inside you; for they want to bring you back to where they live: the mundane world.”

“You are lucky being retired, I have to watch out for them every day in the city, even when I am at college.”

“Yes, you will know them by their works. Dream Killers always want to waste your time. Right from the initial contact a Dream Killer will listen to you, but they will be no communion with you in your spirit about the dream of life. When they think you know what you are all about they will try to kill the dream inside you, by bringing you down in front of others. This is usually how it is done, by pointing out an indiscretion, or more likely something you have said, or not said, to them, or to another.”

“Do you know anything about that man who follows me into town every day. The one who sits at the back of the bus.”

Giovanni thought for a moment: “I do, that man is usually accompanied by a woman. She drives a mini car; I have seen her up at the outhouse. If you look out at the next set of traffic lights you may see her electric mini car. You will not see her though; for the car she drives has tinted windows. However, having said that last Monday when we were travelling into town together her window came down at the toll, as she stopped there opposite the jeweller’s shop, and I got a look at her. I guess she must have wanted to look at something in the shop window.”

“What was she like?”

“Severe face, perfect hairdo, dressed in a business suit, reminded me of a tax inspector. I noticed her car behind the bus today when we left the countryside. She will not be far behind us now.”

“Really.”

“Yes, when the bus stops at the lights have a look and see if she is there.”

Chiara sitting on the facing seat with her back to the road did just that. She had to strain her neck though to look left out of the bus window. The road was busy and she soon gave up searching for the car in question."

"What does she do?"

"Goodness knows. Just be aware of how they operate. They usually work in pairs for all sorts of people, gathering information about others. Don't spend any time worrying about them, though."

Giovanni too turned round and looked out of the bus window to see if he could see the woman in question. In a quiet voice, he counted the cars until he noticed the familiar one lurking behind the delivery van, "Ah, there she is there," he sighed.

Presently, the lights changed and the bus moved off again. "In life, do not dwell on those who are monitoring you. You will not find the dream of life that way. Leave them well alone. Let them follow who they like."

Not to be disturbed by what went on in the outside world, Giovanni and Chiara both stared opposite to where a pram was parked beside a young mother. Chiara knew what he was saying was right, and she soon gave no more thought about the agent following them on the bus, or the woman in the car somewhere in the traffic outside on the suburban street. In good spirits, she changed the subject: "Was grandmother a dreamer?"

"Extraordinary good one, she was. You know she had a way of keeping friends close to her even when they were not there."

"How did she do that?"

“Well, the same way as we do it. After you share the dream of life with someone you will live together with them within the dream.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“You must hold onto the dream and the person you have shared it with must do the same. If you both do that all will be well, and you will live together within the dream of life. Your grandmother shared the dream of life with me that is why I have never forgotten her. Right up until she passed away she was a lovely dreamer was granny.”

“When did she pass away?”

“Oh, it was a long time ago now. You know when I was a wee boy she would dream out loud and I would listen to her. Naturally, I spent a lot of time in her company, especially in the old living room.”

“She told you her dreams?”

“Yes, indeed. Grandmother was always waiting for me in the living room to share her dreams with me. Then one day, not long after we started dreaming together, I went out of the room for a moment to get her something to eat. When I came back she was gone; she had dreamed away happily into eternity.”

“That’s so sad.”

“No its not.”

“You must dream until the end of your earthly life. Your soul lives forever. The dream of life is destined to go on somewhere. As a preacher once said: make sure you have you eyes fixed on heaven as your destination.”

“I see what you mean.”

“I have good memories of grandmother and your mother, and you will have good memories of me too, when I pass away.”

“Don’t say that.”

“The dream of life must go on, my dear. You are a dreamer and inside the dream of life we will always be together.”

Giovanni, as the bus passed the hair salon where his mother used to go to, looked out of the window and reflected about the last time he had sat with her in that very building. From his heart to her soul he recounted this to his daughter: “Your mother was brave right up until the end, she was.”

“And what about grandfather?”

“Yes, grandfather was a dreamer too. Even though he was old and I was young, I remember him. He always shared lovely dreams with me.”

“What was he like?”

“I remember him lying in a hospital bed, brave as any man in this life. Nearing the end, he continued to dream and share the dream of life with me right up until the end.”

“What did he dream about?”

“Sometimes the war, or about his church, and sometimes about people he had met where he had worked in his local area when he was a young man.”

“That sounds interesting.”

“Of course, I was young and could not see what his intention was then, but now I can see it clearly that he was passing the dream of life onto me, before he departed. He certainly knew that life lay inside a dream. You know

before departing, he told me this to me from his last place on earth.”

9

Chiara smiled sadly before asking: “When you go back to the old village, where we used to live, do you meet any of the old villagers - I mean the original ones?”

“Yes I do, and let me tell you they are getting fewer and fewer,” and he laughed.

“Are there any dreamers left in the village?”

“Yes there are one or two, not many though. You see Chiara most people were overpowered by the state at such an early stage in life that they lost the dream of life earlier on. In some instances this happened even before they became men or women. Many of them remained dead to life due to the actions carried out by the Dream Killers.”

“When you were young and you met them in the village, and it came to your attention what was happening, why did you not warn them?”

“I did. I used to tell them all about the Dream Killers - that was not the name I used then when I was young - but they just laughed at me all the same. It is sad looking back now; for many were attacked by them early on in life, and they were never able to free themselves thereafter. Some survived, but they are, as I have said previously, few in number. This is due of course to the control of external factors in life everywhere in the modern world now.”

Chiara smiled at him before asking him another question: “Do you think people in the village know that I am a dreamer, like you? I often go down there for a walk.”

“Yes, and you must protect your dreams from those who are dead to life. See that you do not give your dreams away. The Dream Killers will trample on them, then they will laugh at you for giving them away.”

“Why do they do that?”

“That is the way of those who are controlled by the world.”

“If I could only understand it more, I could show that boy I know at college how to dream.”

“You have a boy friend?”

“He is just a friend; he is a nice lad.”

“You may in time be able to share your dreams with him. You know when eyes look on eyes, they transfer unknown things to them. Even on the street you may be walking towards someone, you may wish to speak with them, you may not know them, but when the dream of life

is upon you, it can bring you together in a most extraordinary way. You will have noticed that many hide their feelings from others in life - even with their eyes. They get so detached that they no longer know how to transfer love in a smile, in a word or action, anymore. You must have seen their deadpan looks, lifeless stares."

"Yes, I have."

"Well, at that point what follows is they become distant from you even though they may be sitting close by you. The trouble is that evil lurks everywhere in this mundane world, and tries to kill the dream of life off before it gets going."

"What should I do when that happens?"

"If the other person you have engaged with does not share the dream of life with you, you need to keep the dream away from them. However, don't give up on them. In time they may become a dreamer just like you. Always be sympathetic to those who have no dreams."

Chiara looked happier now and spoke accordingly: "I met this student last month. She is a girl, a year younger than me. She said she was English. I didn't get to know her name. For whatever reason, the name of a place I had read about that morning came to me when we got talking. When she said to me that she lived just outside London, I said Thames Ditton; for like I say, I had just read about that place in a magazine. You know how I love having fun with place names. She said how do you know that? Although this was extraordinary I noticed the wonder of it all soon faded, as if what I had said had never happened."

“Chiara that was a wonderful interaction. You see that the dream of life was there, the key to happiness, but your friend did not want to share in the fun of it all. She did not understand the dream of life.”

“Yes, you are right. Whatever it was that interrupted the conversation, from then on it had no lasting effect on her, and we never communicated again. I couldn’t understand it.”

“Yes it is sad Chiara when the dream of life passes by, and the wonder of it all fades away again. That was a good example of someone losing the dream of life, even before it got going. Always remember Chiara extraordinary events become mundane very quickly if you don’t share them with another.”

“Listen, another thing happened yesterday during lunch break at college.

“What happened?”

“It was very strange. In the cafe bar not far from the college, I was sitting next to two street preachers. It was obvious something had happened in their church. They both were rolling about laughing. Whatever it was they thought it hilarious.”

“What was it about?”

“That is the thing, I don’t know. The man who joined them thereafter could not understand it either. He like me could not join in the fun; for although they laughed and laughed, they did not share with him what it was that caused them to roll about in their chairs. Like me their friend was left outside of the joke. For whatever reason, I could not interpret what it was either; there was nothing to

go on. One man said it was a dream moment, and the two of them kept on roaring with laughter. They were very much enjoying themselves. Something obviously had happened in their church that had caused them to do this. It had a profound impact on them, but not their guest; for they had not filled him in, in what they were laughing at."

Giovanni tried to understand the confusion caused by laughter between the churchgoers, and as he puzzled over this, in his usual manner with his head tilted back, looking up to the ceiling.

Moments later, he spoke: "The thing is not to feel uncomfortable when people do not share their thoughts with you. If they do not pass on whatever it is they are talking about, and you are left outside, do not feel embarrassed. They themselves are trapped from sharing what has made them in this case happy. We will never know what made them laugh. However, remember Chiara dreamers always share their dreams with other dreamers. You are never left outside of the dream of life when you are with a dreamer. It is obvious that this was not a dream at all, but an escapade. This can be only understood, by reading John Ruskin, *The Ethics of the Dust*. You will need to read him to find out more about that."

"Who was he?"

"A dreamer who lived in the past. You see the dreamer has always the secret of the dream within his, or her, thoughts; the dreamer knows the dream and what is going on."

“I had a dream last night I was in a room full of dancers. However, something was at work to exclude me from joining them.”

“You must remember Chiara night dreams are different from the dreams we follow with open eyes. Night dreams have got to be interpreted. The dream of life is for pure enjoyment. Certainly night dreams can be intuitive, and in many cases you can relate them to your own existence, in my case, sometimes just in the nick of time.”

“How do you mean?” laughed Chiara.

“I dreamt the other night that a man came to me at the airport and asked me for my wallet. I gave it to him, then he disappeared.”

“What do you think that was all about?”

“The fear of the foreigner, I guess.”

Chiara and Giovanni both laughed.

“Whatever my night dreams are all about, I am always excluded from what I want to do in them - like where I want to go?” stamped Chiara.

Giovanni laughed: “Yes, somehow we are part of something and we have experience of it, but the difference is the dream at night is that we are always cut off from it in the end. We never get to share our dreams with others. Some people think the dream of life is silly, and they cannot bare to hold onto the dream within them when they are awake.”

10

As they continued towards the city, some passengers looked over at them; they could see Giovanni and Chiara were having so much fun, laughing like little children.

When the laughter had died away, Giovanni said sadly "Strange though it may sound Chiara some people cannot bare a world that is not mundane."

"That is crazy," replied Chiara indignantly.

"Yes it is. You see the dream of life is too much for them; they cannot handle it. Any supernatural event makes them rush back to a material world, and there they hold on to anything that they can get their hands on. Such

is the power of the material world to draw them away from the dream of life."

"I know some students who are like that."

"Chiara, the dream of life can not be captured and manipulated into the real world. If people listen to music or look at a painting, the music or the painting may inspire them to dream. However, unless they embrace the dream of life they soon fall back into a material world: a world where money, prestige, makes them feel secure. As Racine one said: Without money honour is merely a disease."

Giovanni looked around the bus, as Chiara wondered who he was talking about. She could see he was now looking at his fellow passengers. There was nothing unusual about this morning's journey; it was a familiar setting. Apart for the strange man who sat at the back of the bus, the passengers that morning were mostly elderly women, no doubt off to shop, or meet a friend. Certainly on the bus there were one or two men travelling to the city. They looked out of work, or had taken early retirement.

Yes, everyone seemed to be heading for the big smoke. Was it the weather, or the time they were living in; for the majority of faces, both men and women, looked hard and uncompromising. It was as if when they got off the bus at their destined stop, they would have to do battle with someone or something, out there in the red tooth and claw world. Such was the way their brutal faces portrayed the time they were living in.

Giovanni could see Chiara was wondering about life around her too. As she reflected upon this, he became philosophical: "It is natural that they have become

sceptical after experiencing many disappointments and hardships. We are in an age of great confusion Chiara. It is a defining era. The passengers' faces are a testament to the time we are living in."

Her young face he could see was receptive to everything around her, even though she was quite reserved. Growing up was not easy. Chiara knew that out there in the concrete world there was pleasure, but there was also danger too. The unknown dark shadow lurking around every corner, to all who went after sensual gratification, was waiting for them. Chiara had been given the grace to enter adulthood and still remain as innocent as a child. This was indeed a blessing. The dream of life was there to be seen in the way she looked at others.

Like all attractive young ladies, Chiara knew she was always being looked at. Even though she was not erudite in the arts, in the way her father was, like most young ladies she could process the attention towards herself in a positive way. The dream of life in her thoughts was not to any great extent being transferred from her to others at this stage in life though. Giovanni could see that, however, she was receptive to it and happy to follow the dream of life that led her back to innocence where she liked to go. Yes, perchance to dream, the wonder of life awaited all young ladies of her age.

Giovanni knew there would come a time for Chiara to share that dream with another. He may not see that day, but he enjoyed very much her company and loved going out for walks with her in the countryside. Of course, every Monday they travelled into town together. That was a real

treat; for they both believed in the dream of life and they both lived together in the same dream no matter where they were.

“Anyone who is able to love can conquer any situation,” Giovanni whispered to her: “Never be afraid of love.”

Giovanni knowing what it was like being young smiled at her: “Life is for the living; it has always been that way.”

Giovanni understood young people were getting ready to deal with the mundane world, its trials and tribulations. It appeared to Giovanni that the Dream Killers did not operate much within her young circle at the moment. He knew that young people agitate of course against the world. Many saw it as corrupt. However, for some that would be the nearest they would get to the idea of freedom.

The Dream Killers were erudite about the ways of the world. They encouraged dissent for it brought their victims to the world, and it was there that they killed off the dreams of young and old. Up until that rebellious time they left them alone, that is until they were connected with the world in someway through a tragedy or even a success. It was just a fact of life, Dream Killers were always lurking around every corner waiting to pounce.

Giovanni had warned Chiara about this many years ago, and today He reminded her of this again on the bus: “A Dream Killer can come and take your dreams away from you at any time if you are not careful. You must hold onto the dream of life, and not let it go. You must always be aware of this even especially when you are with your

young friends. Don't let anyone, friend or stranger, kill the dream of life inside you. Remember you only dream once."

Some of the passengers who overheard him say this looked over at him; it was as if he was about to follow it up with another joke.

"Stop it dad, they are looking at us."

"My dear, when you are a dreamer and eyes are on you, never be worried. Many folks are suspicious of happy people - that has always been the way. In a time when everyone has lost their way, you know what to do…"

"No, I don't. What do I do?"

"Always think before sharing your thoughts."

"I do that."

"It is tragic but true, many people have stopped dreaming of life. It is not their fault; for their senses have been dulled due to them not being able to share their dreams with others. They have been told things that have upset them, and due to that they now give little away. Still, if they have the dream of life inside them it is possible for it to be rekindled when they meet other dreamers. All that has happened to them is that they have temporary lost the dream of life. Always remember, the dream of life can come back to them when another dreamer walks into their life."

A woman who looked like a retired school teacher got up to get off at the next stop. She had been sitting in one of the reserved seats for the elderly and infirm. She may have been elderly. but there was nothing wrong with her hearing.

“Who is killing of dreams; I don’t understand what you are saying?” she said, as if she was about to belt him with her handbag

“If you have lost the dream of life inside you madam,” Giovanni sharply replied: “You will not understand what I am saying.”

“I have lost the dream inside me, what do you mean by that?”

The other passengers could see she was ready to argue. Mercifully, for all those sitting downstairs on the bus, she had to get off at the next stop, no doubt to go to the supermarket at the end of the main thoroughfare before the town.

“Dream Killers I have never heard so much nonsense in my life. At your age too…”

11

Although that got Chiara laughing she thought she had better change the subject. When the elderly woman had alighted the bus, Chiara asked her next question: ”What was it like for your generation when you were going out to concerts and dances? Did you have a feeling then that your generation was unique, and that you could change the world?”

“Of course, every generation is like that. The dream of life is for everyone from birth to death. My generation was very much influenced by music. I would say your generation is more impressed by technology.”

“That’s true.”

“I would also say there is a feeling of unity in all generations, but a collective dream, no. There is of course the spirit of the time - that is something completely different though. This changes of course, as the new generation brings forth their interpretation of life, and then it is replaced by another, and so it goes on.”

“How will my generation get out of staring at screens and interacting on social media sites with others they do not know, I wonder?”

“The dream, as you know, is always personal. For some reason some people want to interrupt your dream. When I was your age, I was really starting to get interested in what the dream was all about.”

“You mean you were starting to understand life as a dream.”

“That is correct. The two you see cannot be separated, real life and the dream of life, yet the dream can never be part of life, as the world can never be part of the dream - if I can put it like that. Remember the Dream Killers today do what they have always done: try to kill off dreams.”

“Many students in my college don’t even talk to each other. I can’t see how they are going to share a dream with someone when they can’t even do that.”

“You never know. You can’t tell, for the dream of life always moves around mysteriously. It is only because the Dream Killers have deadened their senses that they are afraid of it. What happens is they attack those who want to share their dreams with others, and this in turn makes others afraid.”

“Was it not the same when you were young?”

“Yes, it was Chiara. The Dream Killers masqueraded themselves in different guises, way back then. The Dream Killers are very clever you know at hiding themselves.”

“Did you have much trouble with them when you were my age?”

“I did. I would say in the main their tactic against me was to make me feel insecure: for example if I did not have a girlfriend, or they questioned the social standing of my parents. That is how they tried early on to upset me and make me conform to the rigid constraints of society. I was wary of them from a very young age, but I pursued my dream, and you must do the same. There is no doubt abut it the dream of life at times can be interrupted, I have to admit that. Some people get it tough. You will know the saying familiarity breeds contempt. Remember that. You can get caught out and before you know it they find out what they are after, and instead of sharing the dream of life with you they try and kill it off by exposing it to others who in turn tear at it, then they mark you out as if you are a loser.”

“How did you find friends to understand your dreams, was it difficult? How did you do that?”

“Well, sometimes it took a while for me to find them, then by chance dreamers would walk into my life. We would be open about such things and share the dream together.”

“Where did you find them?”

“In the most unlikely places, in bars, on buses, even on the street.”

“And you became friends with them?”

“Yes.”

“And where are they now?”

Some have gone, some are ill, and some still are in town hanging around bars and bistros, going to concerts, and fancy restaurants.”

“Were there many dreamers in the local church when you went there?”

“Ah, this is interesting. It is worth telling you again. When I started working, there were certainly many dreamers there in the local church. However, by the time I retired the church was infiltrated by strange spirits. Many believers for whatever reason had taken on the ways of the world. In many cases the faithful were led by unbelievers, and soon they became like them.”

“All of them.”

“Not all, but it was apparent to me that many believers lost their faith during this time due to the involvement of the Dream Killers. And for that reason many parishioners were not able to share the dream of life anymore.”

“How did you find out that the Dream Killers had infiltrated the church?”

“By watching and praying; everything is revealed as soon as it comes to the Light. Please remember Chiara, the Dream Killers are active in all institutions. They operate in the dark and in the shadows.”

“Why did this happen?”

“I am afraid that is a mystery in itself.”

“What are the signs that I should look out for with people masquerading as dreamers, when they really are not?”

“If they are slow in their spirit to reach out, become sceptical. The Dream Killers always wait until a social atmosphere develops, then they join in. They know how society works. You think you are among friends, when you are not. A good example of this is when you are part of a crowd, association or social scene. Something has been formed that you are all part of. You see Dream Killers do not have a dream to offer, so they hide behind others, and they wait until someone reveals their dream. It is easy done in a group. The Dream Killers, as you know, are everywhere in life; many are well read, erudite and in positions of authority. Moreover, many are learned in philosophy even in religion. Many think they are great writers themselves; some maintain they are artists. Like I say, the clever ones wait, they do not jump in to a conversation. They wait until something controversial pops up, and then they try and find a weakness in you, something that makes you self-conscious, unbalanced, unsure of yourself. As soon as they get a chance, they dive into your dream. They don’t care who it is. All they want to do is destroy it. Sometimes they give themselves away by being quick and snappy. You have to be careful. Watch, listen and wait.”

“Yes, I hear what you say, but I still don’t understand how they do it?”

“I would say the majority of Dream Killers hide inside the fashion of the time, and there they try and promote a

philosophy, or movement, popular at the time they are living in."

"That is sneaky!"

"Indeed. They may ask you what you think of this or that topic, and then they try thereafter to confuse you, suggesting different points of view in conflict to what you believe. Controversy is the oxygen for those who want to deceive you."

"What did you say when you were younger when they asked you such questions?"

"I always made a joke about it. If it was a political question they asked me, I would say The only thing I know about politics is that it is divisive."

That got Chiara laughing: "You can say that again. Politicians are a strange lot, right enough."

"Chiara, always remember to be on the outside is not something to be afraid of; for the dreamer there is always time to be alone. As a young man, I had to learn quickly to avoid clever people. I dreamed of freedom all the time. I would look at a pretty girl who had just arrived in the club, but I soon found out that understanding attraction was like looking for life inside life. If I tried to figure her out nothing came of it. However, the one thing I could do was tell if she was a dreamer or not, and there lay the clue if she would understand me or not."

"That is wonderful. How could you do that?"

"I don't know, but it seemed to me to lie in my imagination. It was there I could tell if she would come with me and be part of the dream of life."

"Is that how you met mum."

“Oh yes, your mother was a dreamer, I spotted that right away. She was always independent in her thinking, was your mother. I could see she was a dreamer the night I met her.”

“You could.”

“Some of her friends I had to protect myself from though. However, they soon drifted away. The material world of hate and gain, facts, figures, spreadsheets and recommendations, is always on the go. It leads most a merry dance, you know. Fact checking wants to destroy all dreams and with it dreamers who are caught in the net. Even those who fall in love and share the dream of life together are sought after by the Dream Killers. Please remember that. There is nothing better in life for a Dream Killer to kill off two dreamers in one go; for sharing the same dream together is a crime in their eyes.”

“Sometimes at college I feel my fellow students are anti social. I am always grateful when I meet a fellow student who wants to talk with me, let alone share the dream of life with me.”

“Do you come across many dreamers at the college.”

“Not many, outside the college I do.”

“Yes, sadly most young people are subdued by teachers and lecturers. It has always been that way. At college or university you can indeed get lost in a world of academia. However, you must remember Chiara, to be a dreamer you must never stop dreaming even when others around you are losing their heads to intellectual nonsense, crazy ideas, theories and political stratagems. These things are everywhere in life. You will know influencers or gurus,

are always active on line. They even become otherworldly as they get older. They are like satellites lost in space."

"Yes, you can say that again."

"Even if you tell people to hold on to their dreams that makes no difference. They just look at you as if you are teasing them. Never forget the Dream Killers are after not just the body, but your soul too - if you tell your friends that - that should waken them up!"

"That's scary."

"The problem is that they think it is childish to dream and share the dream of life with others. In many cases the dream of life has faded within them long ago. Now they are lost in space and have turned against anything that lies outside of the material world."

12

As the bus approached the beginning of the city, Chiara wondered aloud: “How can we help people get back inside the dream of life?”

“The sign to look out for is when you see the dream of life fade within a friend. This is likely to happen due to them drinking too much, or they have started to take drugs to make them feel good. When you see this try and get them off that and back into the dream again by reminding them that the dream of life exists within them. This is what the Dream Killers are afraid of. They want to force people to drug themselves to death. They hate the idea of anyone

living outside the nightmare world that they themselves live in."

"I hate Dream Killers."

"No, Chiara, you should not hate anyone. That is wrong to do that."

Giovanni liked to inhabit the space around him. He did this by looking faraway, then relaxing. Now and again he would look at a passenger on the bus. The telling sign to those who knew him was: his eyes became like pools of water, as he wondered about the person he was looking at. Chiara knew he was always happy following the dream of life and looking for that in others. After all, it was how he had lived his own life; he had followed the dream of life since he was a boy. She did not interrupt him when he was dreaming with eyes open wide. Chiara could also tell by looking at others on the bus if they were interested in him or not.

"The dream world is where dreamers live." he often told her.

Giovanni knew Chiara was thinking about him and he was not surprised to hear her say, after a long silence: "Well, they are looking at you now."

"As a dreamer, I can only say that I drift into a transitory state, beautiful and serene, going from somewhere to nowhere, being led and never feeling alone. It is lovely. The sun is always high above me. Once again, I am in the meadow. The trees are gently moving; the air is warm and the birds are singing. The muse throughout every season comes this way and sings his songs to me. He like me dreams as he moves along the country road. The

seasons come and go for him as they do for us all: winter to spring, then summer begins. The poet always waits a while in the meadow as the summer fades into autumn, then he goes back to winter once more with a smile. And so it goes on. This is how a dreamer moves through life."

Chiara knew him too well to ask him anything else at this point. Suddenly a man with an angry voice came on the bus. The bedraggled spectacled middle-aged man right away started complaining to the foreign driver about the technology his bus company was using. Apparently, it was not fit for purpose.

"Listen mate, my card is fine." I use it every day. It is your broken down machine that does not work," he shouted at him like a lawyer at the bar.

The driver was used to this kind of thing; he did not get upset. The foreign driver calmed things down by saying: "That's fine sir, just sit down."

Even though it was early in the morning it was obvious when he came inside the lower deck of the bus, the man had been drinking.

Strangely enough the bedraggled spectacled man tried to make others happy, even though he was still upset. When he passed Giovanni he pointed at him and quipped: "Satoshi Nakamoto."

Although this was a funny comment, it was obvious to Giovanni, he did not have the dream of life in him. When he got off two stops later Giovanni turned and whispered to Chiara: "He is two sheets to the wind that man; the alchemy of drink in his body has made him anti social, anti everything, I think."

“At this time in the morning?” marvelled Chiara.

“My dear, drink is a very unusual thing at any time of the day, it makes people happy for a time, but the dream of life cannot be enhanced by alcohol or drugs. It is true alcohol certainly creates illusions. However, when these illusions fade away and reality kicks in it makes the human upset once more. The reason for that is the world is mundane. A dulled mind cannot understand a muddled up world. Alcohol only makes the world a colourful place for a short time. Drunks usually get upset when they sober up, and they lose their connection to natural dreams. Invariably they become angry at everything around them in the world again.”

13

Giovanni knew that the man who was sitting at the back of the bus following him was a Dream Killer, and would have been listening in when the bedraggled man spoke to the bus driver.

"He is still on the bus you know that chap," he said to Chiara changing the subject.

"I know. I wonder if he is going to follow me into the college today."

"Unfortunately Chiara there are people like this in life. No matter whose payroll they are on, they want to destroy other peoples' lives. You will find that they are methodical and practical in their pursuit of others. Yes, be aware of

them, but do not follow their ways, or be influenced by them in anyway. They love to see uncertainty in others. Those who follow the dream of life never worry about agents following them, or who is working for who. Dreamers always live life within the dream of life; for there we are secure."

"Do you think the man, sitting at the back of the bus will always be like that. Is there no hope for him?"

"There is always hope that he can be saved. However, having said that we don't know why he has involved himself in this kind of work. My experience tells me that at some point in his life he has had a shock, and the vibration of that trauma is still reverberating within him. Whatever it was that upset him way back then is still antagonising his spirit. It follows him wherever he goes. That is why he is keen to align himself with other dark spirits that are antagonistic to those who follow the dream of life. The people he is working for will not help him though; they will destroy him too when the time comes."

"Really, the Dream Killers fight among themselves?"

"You bet they do. When they are out in the field they work together: gathering reports to interrupt the dreams of others. However, in meetings if all is not going well they are at each other's throats."

"Do you think Sam the Surveillance man has been listening into our conversation from the back of the bus?"

"Most certainly, yes."

"How can he do that?"

"They have powerful microphones these days; you will see he has an ear piece in."

“What a creep!”

“Always remember from their actions their intentions are known. As you know they stay in the shadows, like this chap sitting at the back of the bus following us, that is until they get the opportunity to intervene. Don’t bother about him.”

Chiara of course looked round, after looking out of the window she said: “He is now pretending to look at his phone.”

Giovanni was not interested in him, and he too looked out of the bus window: “You will see that white mini car now behind the bus. Do you recognise it?”

“Is that the car that sometimes passes the outhouse late in the evening. I have seen it many times,” said Chiara turning back from the window.

“I noticed it Chiara when we set out this morning, but didn’t like to say; it was right behind the bus.”

Just then, the traffic lights changed and the bus and the white car moved off once more along the road. The driver’s face of the car could not be seen, due to the tinted windows, only a hand on the steering wheel was visible.

Giovanni thought he should remind her about this: “The driver is a woman and a friend of the man who is sitting at the back of the bus.”

“What!”

“Yes, they are working together. I told you I caught a glimpse of her once at the toll. She rolled down the window that day to look at a shop.”

Giovanni thought he had better change the subject: “You know at the moment, I am reading Remembrance of

Things Past by Marcel Proust. If you read Proust you will see how he stayed in the past by transmitting it into the future. The dream of live for him was doing just that. The beauty of life once lived is certainly worth remembering. I guess that is how he must have felt."

"Are you enjoying it?"

"Just started it, it is quite a large book. Like I say, he is looking back when he was a boy in the garden where he lived with his parents. He goes back into the past from the present from pure memory - quite a thing to do, you know. Don't you think?"

Chiara wondered for a moment: "I guess so."

"All dreamers know, deceit is the poison used by Dream Killers, no matter what time we are living in. They want not only to kill off the present dream, but the future and the past ones too. Nothing is sacred to them in this life. They even hate dreams in fairy tale books, love stories by great poets as well as fiction writers."

"How did you get on when mum passed away? Did you not meet any one else?"

"Yes, well some women did appear on the scene. In fact, I don't think I have told you this. It was a most interesting time. On one occasion one woman said she wanted to drag me out of the fantasy world, I was living in, and make me live in the real world. Others were not as stringent as her, although their intentions were the same though, but not so obvious. They all soon drifted away. I think many men are tricked this way."

"What was her name?"

"Eva."

“Was she nice?”

“Yes, she was attractive.”

“And the rest?”

“Yes they were attractive, but the ones I met could not share in the dream of life with me, and like Eva they soon drifted away. One woman was very odd indeed. How can I put it? She tried to accord with my sensibilities, but this was only a pretence to weaken my belief in the dream of life. Her intentions I could see were like the rest to weaken me. This came to light when she tried to bring me down in company. How strange she was.”

“How did she do that?”

“She wanted me to travel with her to faraway places.”

“Did you?”

“Yes. but when we came back she wanted me to change house before we went away again, and no doubt repeat this cycle every other year.”

“Really.”

“Yes, her joy I could see was in making others unhappy by trying to mix them up. She was, however, happy when I took her to expensive restaurants, or functions in the city, and introduced her to influential people. She was in her element then, poor thing.”

“I wonder where she is now.”

“I wonder indeed. Like I say some women, after your mother had gone, lingered for a time, then seeing that they could not kill the dream of life in me, one by one they drifted away. The past, the future, and the present, you see means nothing to those whose only goal is to kill off the dream of life in another.”

“Yes, I can see that, it must have been a difficult time for you after mother passed away.”

“Well, it was, but my dream is still ongoing. The love of life is always to be found in the dream of life. Even though I have come across let’s say interesting people, I still like meeting strangers. You know sometimes when I am going through the city, I am stopped by strangers and they say the most interesting things to me. One young man the other week took a picture of me.”

Chiara interrupted him: “Is that what you mean when you say the dreamer is always travelling somewhere.”

“That’s right. Even when the dreamer is just looking at someone and wondering about them, the dream of life is going on.”

14

Soon Giovanni was thinking once more about the subjects around him on the bus. He often mentioned this to his daughter Chiara, pointing out tragic faces to her and how they had always something to say: “Look see they have survived to tell us how extraordinary life is.”

The young woman who offered a grumpy man a seat had some success. This was observed by Giovanni: “Well, it has stopped him complaining about busses coming along like bananas.”

Chiara thought this funny: “What do you mean by that?”

“He maintains they come along in bunches.”

This woman smiled at him when she got up to get off at the next stop. She bent down and spoke said quietly: “This morning, I have had some bad news, about a friend,” she said lowering her head as she whispered to him.

“Oh,” replied Giovanni.

“I was worried about her after she went abroad to work there.”

“Where did she go to?” asked Giovanni interested in the conversation.

“Geneva. I lost touch with her last year. I knew she was having trouble with her husband. I didn’t get involved though. Now she is gone.”

“I see,” replied Giovanni.

“I got the news this morning from someone in my local church. Her father still goes there. But there is something odd about it; her body is to be returned back to this country, but no word of what happened to her.”

“You will no doubt hear more about it at the funeral service,” said Chiara tenderly, as she bent forward.

“Well, that is the strange thing, it is to be private.”

Chiara added: “Did she have any friends where she lived abroad?”

“No. After she got married she was isolated from her friends since moving abroad, then she stopped writing to me.”

“Did anyone ever visit her,” Chiara asked trying to find out more.

“Yes, last year a friend did from my local area, but she said she found the place where she stayed strange. She never met any of her family, or any of her friends. There is

something odd about it all was what she said, but then again she just put it down to another culture."
Giovanni felt something was wrong; for this was transferred in the voice of the young lady to him.
"Yes, I understand."

After the young lady got off at the next stop Chiara sighed and asked: "What do you think happened?"

"I think she has been attacked and killed by the Dream Killers. What we do know is her friend has passed from this world. We need to pray for her spirit Chiara."

Even in tragedy Giovanni was beautiful with words. He glided through tragedy the way only dreamers can do.

Chiara knew she could speak to him about such difficult subjects, anytime, anywhere. When they talked about the past she would go with him and inhabit his world, where he had once lived. For a long time now she had noticed that the dream of life always went on with those who were keen to follow it. "Follow the dream until the end," was the best maxim she had ever heard.

With the story of the young lady, who had perished in a foreign land, fresh in his mind, the urgency of thought in action provoked Giovanni to say: "The world is evil. We should never forget that, at home or abroad."

Giovanni knew that Chiara was a blessing to him and he must help her in every way. She loved the arts. However, unlike others who had been drawn to them thankfully she had not been overcome by the aesthetic principle in life. She knew the Saviour was the King of life.

Giovanni knew students could get lost in the arts, and at all times he tried to be sympathetic. In any event, Chiara

knew all she had to do was ask him to help her if she was troubled by anything. Mercifully, she knew she was not the only dreamer in this world. Even though Giovanni seldom appeared down in life, at all times Chiara tried to keep his spirits up. After all they both lived within the dream of life together. It was a wonderful thing to have an understanding of the dream of life, and when it came upon them both at the same time, that was really something. They were always happy together and both tried to help each other.

Chiara could see that when you helped someone you moved towards the dream of life. She knew that the dream of life leads people away from the Dream Killers; for they only operate in the world. Dream Killers have no influence beyond this world. The effect on those who have escaped the influences of the world is very moving indeed. Everyone can see in those who have escaped being oppressed, the wonder of love within the dream of life; for those who avoid the world and all its ways. All that is needed is a sign of a dream, and the dream of life starts to get going again.

15

Giovanni's main worry at the moment was the country he was living in was going in the wrong direction. The phrase 'send for the driver' came to mind. He had heard many people talk about this on the bus when he traveled to town on a Monday.

This was a reference from a so called health authority to sanction the use of morphine to an elderly patient who had more often than not dementia. Of course, this was to ease their pain, and in most cases it was completely successful.

“There is never a complaint by the patient thereafter,” is how one care worker one day joked to his friend on the bus, “for there is no patient.”

Giovanni had heard care workers say this expression before on the bus, but it was not until he heard that the patient would not be there the next day he understood fully what the saying meant. Assisted dying was up and running in the time he was living.

Trying to forget such things, Giovanni listened to the music being played from a passenger’s personal device. The song of course was playing to alert the owner of it to an incoming call. He recognised the jingle; it was a song from his youth. At night, Giovanni still listened at home to some of his old favourites on an old fashioned turntable. It was the colours from the vinyl of the old songs that produced in him a nostalgia that made him once again be with them. From this song he knew so well, in this instance it took him back to the time when he had first heard it. He reckoned he would have been about the age of Chiara was now.

Even though it was just a ringtone in the blink of an eye Giovanni felt that he wanted to conquer the world again. In that moment, as the instrumental chorus rang out in his head he was once more young, free, and single. Not only that he was an idealist again. The music however ceased for the passenger found her phone in her bag and took the call, and with that the illusion within him faded.

“I’m on the bus…” wailed indignantly the woman.

The extraordinary enthusiasm from his youth wanting to conquer the world again lingered with him for a time.

Alas though it soon vanished like the hero who had sang the song; for the singer had passed away years ago. However, he smiled to himself knowing that his youth still lay there somewhere inside him. Giovanni was not reticent or sentimental about the past. As he came back into the present, he sighed: “Ah, they were the days.”

Chiara notice this emotion in him as he drifted from the past back to the present; a youthful expression shimmered for a moment, then as it faded she smiled to herself. She could see by the way he looked at her he was now once again firmly fixed on the day in front of him.

Knowing that he was heading to the city centre to look at the shops and visit the places he knew so well and liked, Giovanni always had an interesting look on his face. It was as if he was going on holiday. Chiara knew that the one saving grace for him was the dream of life continued inside of him, and he was willing to share it with others.

Like all dreamers, Chiara knew the allusions from music were different from those that make up the dream of life. It was interesting though for in his company when he found himself surrounded by admirers and friends, Giovanni would talk to them about the glorious time they had together dancing and drinking. Many of his friends of course she had been told had been taken by the Dream Killers, and now instead of celebrating life interrupted the dreams of others. It was true - was it not - in all generations many went over to the other side; for whatever reason.

Giovanni had said as much to her: “In adult life dreamers can find themselves against those who they used to dream with. It is a dangerous world Chiara.”

Of course, this understanding of life came from experience. That’s how Giovanni knew about the Dream Killers. Chiara knew that. When he was young. he had witnessed many dreams of dreamers being attacked, then killed off. Indeed many of his friends had lost their way.

The poor souls, Chiara could see when she met them, were stranded now somewhere halfway between heaven and hell. Some of them she regularly bumped into in the city. She always recognised his old friends. Many had embraced the unreal world of technology and corporate greed. When she saw them again she could see how dreamless they were. Sometimes only talking about events faraway that they had come across on the Internet. Giovanni, however, always remembered his friends when they were young. He never forgot them. They were happy back then. However, Chiara could see some of them now were wandering about in a maze never mind a daze.

Chiara could also see in her father that all through his life, trouble and strife, he had not given up on his old friends. Even now elderly. he was still full of dreams. He understood the dream of life and in so doing he tried to help others.

As the bus went by the historic area where Mary Queen of Scots had fought her last battle, Chiara asked him: “Are you still writing short stories?”

“Yes, I am working on one at the moment.”

“What’s it about?”

“It is about a young boy and his dog; they go hiking through the countryside. They do this every day to escape the people who have come to destroy the local villages.”

It had become a custom, Giovanni before they went off to bed would always read something to Chiara to help her understand the mystery of the dream of life. Every night after supper he would read a short story to her. Sometimes they were the ones written by himself, other times old favourites from his childhood.

Chiara smiled to herself and gently said: “I look forward to hearing it.”

“The boy I write about has few friends, but he has a great imagination; he confides all his thoughts to his dog, Dandy. However, Dandy is not the only one who hears these stories he tells him.”

“No.”

“No, there is a man from the village who hides himself in the forest every day. He is a strange fellow who follows the boy and the dog. What happens is this man records the stories he hears the boy tell the dog. For they are very exciting stories and mostly about people in the local village. The man intends to make money from them. In a strange twist of fate, one day the dog sniffs him out and chases after him until the man runs into a tree. In doing so, the man drops the tape machine to the ground. The dog faithfully delivers it to his master. That night the boy in bed listens to himself talking to his dog. He knows he cannot speak to those in the village about such things; for they are afraid of those who have been sent to the village to

interrupt their dreams. “Dandy, I am afraid I will have to bury this tape recorder in the forrest tomorrow.”

“What did Dandy say?” asked Chiara with a huge smile on her face.

“Ah, Dandy, he was fast asleep dreaming about chasing strange men through the forrest.”

16

Giovanni could not help but notice how young ladies were looking at him. Many he could see got on at the last stop called the monument. He knew young ladies were different from women of a certain aged who looked toward dreamers with disdain. Many of these women had lost the dream of life and had embraced the world after having been badly treated by men. They understood many lives - not just their own - had been brutally changed by the Dream Killers, and for whatever reason made no distinction now between men young and old.

However, this was not true of young people in life. They were always on the lookout for a mate, and were open about new ideas. Giovanni understood them. Many

young folk chatted to him and asked him questions about the dream of life. He noticed their words would sometimes get tangled up in conversation, but that was the way it was with those who were looking for adventure in a dangerous world. He never stopped telling them: the dream of life is always on the go.

On a more serious note, Giovanni knew the dream of life could be interrupted by images of money and power; he was tentative with the young when they asked such questions. It was a deadly mistake to challenge any young person as to what they believed in. He understood that the driving force for the young was certainly happiness, but how to achieve this he could see took many forms. Many could see what he said made sense and thought more about what he was saying.

It was sad though when Giovanni came across young folk who had lost their dreams at such a young age. The majority welcomed his help; for after what had happened to them they knew that this was an evil world they were living in and were most certainly looking for a way out of it.

Giovanni had also noticed that those who had been interfered with by the Dream Killers liked to talk to him. This was in total contrast to people of a certain age. Many of the teenagers he noticed were young ladies; older men who dreamed he could see fascinated them.

After all, all young men and women dreamed - did they not. He could see that for the most of them they were aware of something beyond them. Though some of the lads he met from the old village he noticed were not talkative,

as before in the way they used to be. He put this down to the fact they spent endless amounts of time on their computers these days.

It was as if the time they were living in everything went through that electrical device. It was sad the majority did not talk to him openly about their lives anymore. He could see that they knew this was not an open society. There was no doubt about it the state were oppressive towards free speech.

Consequently, young people did not want to share with others, who they did not know, their thoughts or attitudes about life. For many years now the locals in the village felt insecure coming and going from places they did not know. Giovanni when he met young people from the village still told them to avoid thought control, before recommending them to follow the dream of life. “It is wonderful,” he would always say to them before speaking openly about his own life.

He knew the mystery of life for them was the same as it had always been; but due to technology young people he could see had learned to keep away from things they could not see on a screen. Odd as that sounds, this was a problem.

In essence they could not go beyond their own digital experience. It was so extraordinary why this had happen. The mystery of life could never be understood by those who could not share in the dream of life. To celebrate life you had to be part of real life. This had nothing to do with being online.

Giovanni knew the sex dream was the most difficult thing to handle; for everyone, no matter what age they were. It could be completely overwhelming for most folk. And yet for many he could see it was destructive. He knew that sex was something natural and beautiful. Yet, it was unexplainable, and therefore he spoke little about this to anyone.

It was no use engaging with anyone on that. He often said that to Chiara. “Snoopers are everywhere. Don’t let the Dream Killers into your living room, never mind your bedroom.”

Giovanni liked the mysterious world; for lovemaking he knew could never be explained. Looking around the bus it was plain to see the faces of the men that got on from the suburbs were not happy. In fact, their faces were brutal looking. Once seated, they just stared ahead as if something unpleasant awaited them when they got off the bus. It was natural to wonder if the young lads of the village would end up like this too. No doubt harsh words had come to those men, and by the look on their faces they were ready to respond to any opponent if and when the opportunity arose.

The majority of women who got on the bus after the country fields had disappeared did not look happy about life either. Middle aged and old had severe visages, and not only that endless tragedies reflected in their eyes. Few it could be seen were ready to reveal their feelings to anyone who spoke to them, never mind their triumphs. It was all hidden away somewhere inside some secret metaphor. No matter where they looked be it out the window, or straight

ahead into a shop or doorway, the tragedians seemed to sense they could not escape the Dream Killers in life.

17

“The country is in a dreadful state.”

He heard a woman complain to a fellow passenger two seats to the left of him.

Giovanni listened for the reaction to what she said.

“Yes, it is, but I tend to ignore what is happening. I stopped listening to the news years ago,” came the smart reply.

“What did you dream about last night?” asked Chiara seeing him homing in on the conversation near to them.

“I dreamt I was with my mother and she was taking me to a restaurant. All of a sudden we were inside a large building, and moving between ornate rooms I guess to get towards our table.”

“So, what happened?”

“I am not exactly sure. All of a sudden we were back home, and someone delivered a small car outside the house. It was the old house we were in, where we used to live. I have no interest in cars, as you know, but mother always wanted one - even though she never drove. When I went outside to inspect it, I could see that it had been sent to the wrong address,” and they both laughed.

Giovanni knew his nighttime dreams were interesting, though he always maintained they did not affect him in real time. However, he was not apathetic towards them and tried to interpret them whenever he could. Wherever they came from the subject matter remained somehow in his memory.

“Night dreams of course are interesting to day dreamers,” is how he put it. “They always appear new. The situation more often than not is familiar to you, is it not? And the collection of images at times are wonderful. However, as soon as I awake I am once more back inside the dream of life again. My throat may be parched, my body sore, here and there, but that does not matter. The dream of life goes on. Every morning, after I throw the duvet back, I go forward in the name of love. Do you dream Chiara?”

“My dreams are usually about mysterious men who are trying to impress themselves upon me.”

“I see.”

Just then a woman came on the bus. She was short sighted and was watching every move she made on her way to sit down. As she passed those sitting inside she

wondered if it was the dreamer from the outhouse who was sitting there on one of the foldaway seats. She wasn't sure though, so she shuffled up towards him: "Is that the dreamer," she wondered, then seeing it was him reported. "I have been praying for you, you know."

Giovanni knew who was praying for him. This woman had once been a missionary in Africa and now in her old age she loved to lose herself in music. He could see she had her fiddle with her in her small case. No doubt off to some recital in the church not far from the city.

The man who was always on the bus with his golf clubs looked over at Giovanni. All his gear promoted his football team. He looked his usual solitary self. This man ignored everyone and everyone ignored him. The short sighted elderly woman looked at him as she sat beside him. She knew in the Internet age there were people acting for others who wished others harm. He was too far gone in his worship of his football team though to be a snitch. She looked around the bus again. Before alighting two stops later: "she confirmed her thoughts to the dreamer: "they say they are everywhere these days you know…"

Thinking about the woman with the fiddle once she had gone, Giovanni sighed and said to Chiara: "She is right you know. The Dream Killers are slow and calculating, devious to the point of death. Life for them is all about vengeance."

When he looked at the man at the back of the bus there was nothing much that impressed upon his senses to describe him. He was an anonymous man.

"Sam the Surveillance man is still there, I see."

It was well known that what the Dream Killers did when they were monitoring a target was act indifferent to all events around them. Other agents tactics could be different when they were following someone. They could take many forms from putting concrete down a target's drain, to sending them strange letters or emails. The Dream Killers liked to give people lots of things to think about, and lots of tasks to do.

Some nefarious departments even sent out endless emails and letters asking the citizen for information about what they were doing. Then they would send someone out to stare at them on the street or on the bus or train. That was not Sam the Surveillance man's job though. It was obvious that he was not trying to interrupt anyone. He was just monitoring, as they say a target. They were odd characters indeed those who wanted to bring others down. Giovanni had learned to avoid them.

"Do you remember the neighbours who went against me at court?"

"Chiara reacted immediately: "Can I forget that.

It was true one time two neighbours brought a case against him at the local court. There was nothing much he could do about that. He knew you only needed two people to say something bad about you and for the prosecutor to act. The judge came down on their side.

He remembered, as he sat on the bus, the case how they had arrived in the courtroom with their civic positions in society beaming out to all who looked their way. Yes, they were indeed honourable citizens. One of his accusers even told the court that he had never had an argument

with his fellow accuser - that really impressed the judge. He was such an upstanding fellow this chap, how could he be wrong accusing another citizen of upsetting him. He was doing this of course to show he was also an upstanding man in the community. He was protecting others. They were absolute credible witnesses said the judge even though they had no credible evidence.

Giovanni mimicked the unjust judge: “You should not have told them not to park outside your house, by doing this you caused them fear or alarm,”

However, once the case had finished. There was nothing they could do to Giovanni. There was nothing else they could attack him with. They had both shown their hand against him. After this case against him, Giovanni did not worry about them again.

He remembered that his dreams increased at the time of the court case so much so that when on the stand and in the court he wondered who it was they were trying to convict. He felt they were convicting another person, certainly not him.

Yes, the judge sitting there, his accuser on the stand, the people in the gallery, the secretary taking notes, the defence representative head down listening intently, and the prosecutor acting as if transported back to Rome in the time of Julius Caesar.

After it had finished, Giovanni was happy they had excluded themselves from his company now. That was a blessing indeed. He related all of this to Chiara as the bus moved off again: “The secret of the dream of life is do not let it be interrupted. The secret of the dream of life is to

keep going. No one can be friendly to you who wishes to do you harm. Once a person's true intentions come to the light and can be seen to be against you, they have shown their hand. They themselves know they can no longer fool you. You can forget those who are against you after that. Their feelings towards you come out in the full light of day after the relationship ends. The dream of life continues for those who believe in the Light, and this is wonderful."

18

For Giovanni the dream of life was something worth living within the dream. Not long after the musician alighted the bus, he turned to Chiara and said: “For me the most interesting thing in life, then as now, is as soon as someone’s eyes are on me, I feel the presence of another in my soul, and just for that moment we are together, in the dream of life. As you know not everyone wants to join in though, and in many cases nothing comes of it. We do not worry about these kinds of things though; for when a dream is shared, it cannot be broken. The Dream Killers can not divide and rule dreamers. I noticed this in a profound way when I first visited Italy as a young boy.

Thereafter the Italian culture ran through me. The mists of time are very interesting. I believe the dream of life goes back right to the beginning of life."

Everyone who knew Giovanni could see he had a genuine liking and interest for others. And if someone felt the same as he did, it was marvellous. However, more often than not the dream never got going between him and another. In fact, he had mentioned this to Chiara just the other week. The interruption to the dream of life was something both of them knew happened on a daily basis.

All you had to do was listen to news reports and you could see the workings of the Dream Killers: they were active all over the world. Nevertheless, Giovanni moved on in life in a spirit of love wishing those around him well, even those who were not interested in him, or the dream of life. He could see many were trapped, or had been coerced away from good things by those who work in the dark.

"They who operate in the shadows, mean nothing to me. The dream of life is always there," he often said to those who did not believe in what he was telling them, "All you have to do is look for the dream," and he left it like that.

Sam the Surveillance man, as Chiara called him, on the bus that morning for some unknown reason just then started coughing. He discreetly brought out a tissue.

Giovanni could see Chiara was annoyed with him and was staring at him: "He is an odd ball," she said seeing her father looking at her.

Giovanni to distract her told her one of his favourite jokes: “I have often wondered where nudists keep their hankies?”

“You know that man once followed me into the college. He came right into our cafe bar. It is an open access area now, and the public can come in to get something to eat.”

“I didn’t know that; I might pop in some time.”

A pretty girl got on the bus at the next stop and smiled at Giovanni; this took him by surprise, so much so that he did not have time to react right away to what Chiara was saying. This was unusual for him to do that. He recovered quickly though, by saying: “Life lies within itself. There are now’t queer but folk, as mum used to say.”

“How do you mean?”

“When the man followed you, did he try and disguise himself?”

“No, he just came right inside the college, bought himself a coffee at the counter, then he sat down in a faraway corner and from there kept an eye on me.”

“I see.”

The thing Giovanni had to watch out for was Chiara losing herself in a dreamless world. This was a danger to all dreamers. He knew that much was true for all who followed the dream of life. He always talked to her about every situation. Giovanni thought he had better mention this again: “Remember old dreams are of no use to you; they cannot be brought back into the present life. Only dreams that are subject to you at the time you are living can make you feel wonderful.”

Sometimes people in the city would stop Giovanni and ask him where he was going, or where he came from. Everyone could see, Giovanni had been given the presence of someone who was at ease with people and did not mind them talking to him.

Last Monday one young lad from Athens traveling through the city stopped him. Giovanni found out he was Christian, and he told him where the Greek Orthodox church was and mentioned a friend who went there who could be contacted. This was where the dream of life was active for Giovanni. It was wonderful when others shared the dream of life with you. Giovanni himself loved to travel, and knew when abroad the traveller was at the mercy of the stranger. Thankfully, many travellers were dreamers.

“Are you listening to me at the college cafe bar, the young Iranian girl who works there noticed Sam the Surveillance man looking at me. She said in a curious voice to me ‘that man sitting in the corner is watching you’. I asked her how she knew that? “I can tell he has an interest in you. She told me, ‘for I come from a land where the state oppresses their citizens every day, following them everywhere’. She was over here to escape all of that, but was surprised to see it was going on here too.”

“Was she disturbed by the man in your cafe bar?”

“No, not at all she told me ‘where I come from there are lots of men like that’ and I laughed.”

“Where was she from?”

“Beirut, I think it was. The next time he came in to buy himself a coffee she played a trick on him.”

“What did she do?”

“She asked him if he wanted a complimentary ticket for the afternoon play the following day that the college was putting on in the arts centre. ‘We will send you a ticket to your phone’ she said to him. All you have to do is leave your name and address.’ The man was never seen again in the cafe bar after that.”

After a few more stops another admirer came on the bus. Chiara or Giovanni didn’t notice her at first. Presently, the woman spoke to Giovanni about mundane things like the weather, the new government in America, followed by the refugee boats pouring across the channel. Then out of the blue she asked him: “What age are you?”

Giovanni smiled and replied: “Double your age, my dear.”

“That makes you sixty eight,” she said grinning.

Giovanni was older than that and pointed upwards to heaven indicating her to count the rungs on the invisible ladder to get there.

He knew people wanted to kill off dreams by turning the world into numerals. He knew this woman came from the village where he was born, though she had not been born there, but arrived later on in life.

“When I hadn’t seen you in the village, I was worried about you, so much so that I searched the death notices for your name.”

Giovanni knew she could be more persistent than others about annoying him.

“Why do you look for the dead among the living?” he asked her.

Many were like this. They had no real interest in the dream of life. That of course was interesting in itself. He had noticed the majority who were in the old village were aimless now and preoccupied themselves by finding out as much as they could about others. Mercifully, this woman was not a Dream Killer - just a busy body.

Giovanni had no interest in facts and figures; he wanted to dream out way beyond people and places into where he knew love was not an illusion. He laughed and listened to her talk on.

She was not a bad soul at heart and she gave him a present of some sweets and chocolate before she alighted at the park gates. This was the start of the shopping area. Many people like to show off, even on the bus.

Giovanni smiled to himself, as he drifted into his imagination: “Never forget the dreamer in life can connect with other dreamers anywhere in the world. Distance means nothing to them.”

Chiara remembered him saying this before and she nodded after he had repeated the aforementioned to her. She loved to experiment in her own way about these kinds of things. Due to her age though she was wary of people; for she had seen things with her own eyes and heard things with her own ears that confirmed the Dream Killers were indeed active at every level all over the world. She knew that the only way to avoid them was to keep on dreaming. But who should she share the dream of life with was still an open question to her?

It was true dreamless people could not share the dream of life with others. In fact, many who were stuck in

the world admitted they were from the world and subordinate to it.

“This man that follows me everyday,” Chiara said, as she looked again to the back of the bus, “He is just a harmless idiot. You are right Surveillance Sam is not worth bothering about.”

“I am glad you think so?”

“Look at him he is just an nonentity.”

“Chiara Dream Killers can come in all shapes and sizes, colours and creeds,” then after a pause Giovanni thought he should remind her: “You cannot tell by looking at them how dangerous they are, only by their actions are they known. They hide their intentions until they strike. Many citizens have become paranoid so much so that they stop engaging with others in fear that they will come to the attention of the Dream Killers.”

“That’s what all my friends say,” admitted Chiara “You can’t trust anyone these days.”

“Yes, they are dangerous, that’s true,” Giovanni said solemnly.

As always after affirming what he believed, Giovanni looked to the ceiling. Then he spoke again: “Some Dream Killers offer nothing much at all; they just observe, monitor and report on others. They know there are plenty of unhappy souls out there who they can keep an eye on. And they are not the only ones, you know. Many ignorant citizens pass on their observations in complete ignorance to the authorities. You may never hear about this, but it is true. You hear about it all the time citizens being taken to court. There is to be a trial. Unknown to those caught in

the net people have been actively against others for years. You also hear all the time: people disappearing from sight, car crash, someone suddenly dying from a heart attack, falling ill, poisoned."

"What do you mean by that? Chiara asked in a serious voice that matched her look.

"Well, when people who are in positions of power feel that their businesses are being threatened, they employ others to act on their behalf. High profile people are always under scrutiny more so more than the common man. However, if any citizen continues to say things against them, or the country they represent, they soon come to the attention of the Dream Killers, and you can be sure they will offer their services to those who need them. You may never be sure who they are working for; their actions are always done in the dark. It is just a fact of life. They work away against others and no one knows who they are, or what they do, but they do exist. They have bumped off many people in this life. There are always disputes, court cases, business deals going wrong, love affairs that have turned toxic, corrupt officials, scandal in a government department, policemen and civic leaders gone over to the other side. Many in this life seek revenge against others."

"Do they actually kill them?"

"Yes, they do indeed. The old method I hear is back in vogue."

"What is that?"

"Poison. Many modern poisons used to day you see cannot be detected. And even if they do detect the use of a

toxic substance it is difficult to prove who it was that did the deadly deed. You hear reports all the time: businessman died abroad in hotel. Politician died at a conference. Man died in a car crash. Man falls out of his hotel room window onto railings. Gas explosion. Man dies on a motor boat…"

Chiara was quite shocked on hearing this, and to distract herself she turned her head away in disgust and looked out of the bus window. However, it did not seem to work. This time her eyes narrowed and the expression on her face became severe.

Giovanni noticed this and quickly instructed her: "You should never think of such things. Never let the Dream Killers affect you. Just be aware of them. The dream of life is worth living for all dreamers. This is what you must embrace - not those who are working in the shadows. The way to survive is for the dreamer to find another dreamer who can share the dream of life with them. The dream of life is for everyone, and once you are sure your have a friend who can share the dream with you, this is indeed wonderful. You will never look back."

Chiara looked more at ease now, and she smiled reassured that life was once again worth living.

As if prompted by an unknown friend listening in somewhere on the bus, Chiara philosophically reflected: "I know people who find dreams in music, in books, paintings, and some in films. Many students at my college even think their life is like a film. One student films herself all day long then uploads it to the Internet before she goes to sleep."

Giovanni smiled at her. “The dream you have been given is, as you know, out of this world. It cannot be captured by any medium. You are always safe within the dream. Never forget the dream of life is your route to safety.”

“I know what I am doing.”

“And don’t forget the dream of life can only be accessed by those who are like children. Children are innocent. They live completely inside a dream world. The interruption of innocence is something dreadful, and we should never go anywhere near that.”

“Don’t you think that those who constantly moan a lot are well worth avoiding, as well as those who side with the Dream Killers?”

“Well, one hopes they find their way out of that.”

19

Just then a young mother came on the bus with her teenage son. Like most shoppers she was no doubt going to the supermarket, the large one before the city centre. Her son instinctively went towards Giovanni for the young lad knew him from the old village where he once stayed. It's the dreamer," he cried to all that could hear him. "I am going to university now," he boasted to him.

"You had better watch out you may be in danger of losing the dream of life. Did you know you can be illiterate and still be part of the dream of life. Never forget that my young friend."

The young man laughed, and in an ironic tone responded: “I will.”

“Do you still live in the house opposite the old primary school?” asked Giovanni.

“Yes mum is still there, but I am getting my own flat.”

“You know when I was your age we used to sit outside your house on the railings opposite the school gates.”

“Next time you visit the village, you will see mother has painted the door pink.”

“Pink that’s a bright colour.”

Presently, the young man and his mother got off at the supermarket, and there he was given some instructions. “Your computer course can wait,” his mother told him as she bumped her trolly down on the pavement. We need to buy food to live.”

Knowing that Giovanni wrote constantly in his diary his daydreams and his night thoughts, Chiara prodded him: “Tell me another one of your night dreams.”

“Well, this one seems so natural, my mother and father appeared at my door and I let them in. We were happy to see each other again. Dad had recovered from his illness and mother was so happy about this she came to tell me. It was wonderful to see them again.”

Giovanni never worried about the man who was following them. He never thought much about Sam the Surveillance man, or anyone else for that matter listening in on some high tech device on what he was saying. Of course, they knew where everyone stayed. He knew agents sometimes wandered up to the old outhouse and pretended to take pictures of each other. They were usually

in pairs, clever people they were who followed others. They had been taught all the skills on how to deceive and blend in with society. He knew they had been trained to fit in with every day activity wherever they went. Giovanni knew they also commissioned others to monitor citizens online while local agents did the foot slogging.

He told Chiara as much: “Last Monday I was waiting for the bus in town back to the country, I got chatting to a neighbour from the old village. I knew she was working for the MOAN agency. You will know her to look at. She is a strange one, always smiling at you like a cat. She lives down near the shops in the old village. Originally not from the village though; her husband passed away a few years ago. Nice and friendly she is. Anyway, as we stood there at the bus stop she let it slip that she was working for the agency against dreamers. She had lost the dream of life a long time ago and had become captured by the Dream Killers. I could see that quite clearly. She now spreads lies about all sorts of things. The corporation, as you know, is against free speech and free expression and encourages complete allegiance to the digital world. Every neighbourhood they say has a MOAN agent. Strangely enough, this woman did not worry about being blown. She continued to chat to me about such things, as we waited for the bus. She even acknowledged where her office was in town where she worked from.”

The one thing Giovanni knew about the people following him - government agents or foreign adversaries - they were trying to kill off the dream of life. The Dream Killers could be identified not just by those who were

monitoring citizens, but by those who pretended to be friends of dreamers. He watched all around him.

Not far from the city centre a man got on the bus outside the building where the bust of John Knox and David Livingston could still be seen above the main entrance. Giovanni recognised him, but for a moment could not remember who he was.

“That’s right he used to live in the old village. I remember him now; he never says good morning to anyone.”

Chiara watched the man take a seat down stairs on the bus. “The bourgeois are like that,” she whispered cheekily.

“You are too young to remember him. he lived opposite us many years ago. He once professed to be a friend of mine, he was always inviting me to go to functions with him when we were both working in the city. However, after the Calder affair he stopped doing that.”

“What was the Calder affair about? Chiara naturally inquired.

“Oh, there was corruption in the local government over finances. An agent disappeared from sight, then after that things became problematic. There are many like that; they only want to make money. They come from faraway places, and after there work is done, they return there. The world is full of anonymous do gooders.

Even when this man got up to get off two stops later, he did not acknowledge Giovanni or Chiara, as he passed by them.

Chiara noticed this and whispered: “They call them Woke Folk these days,” and she giggled like a schoolgirl.

Giovanni was more dogmatic: “Dream Killers can hide, or they can be in full view around you. When they appear don’t forget they want to convict others around them. Then they escape. The strange thing is though they never say hello or goodbye.”

Anyone who looked his way could see Giovanni was in a wonderful dream state. The red tooth and claw world around him did not impinge upon him in any way. Giovanni lived life to the full speaking with people wherever he went. He had never considered the need to change this. Giovanni was open about that; it was always interesting to him though when people did not want to engage with him in the dream of life. The dream of life itself was always on offer, but he knew the majority did not seem interested in it. When questioned about this people usually said they were living in the real world.

“Only those who could dream can see beyond this world,” was how he always replied to them.

Giovanni had learned to be self-effacing and never take himself too seriously. Giovanni always made fun of those trying to upset others. He knew there were too many people out there ready to kill dreams by pointing out the failures of those who were dreaming their lives away.

It was the way it was, most people had been interfered in some way or other by the prince of the world. In a strange way, the Dream Killers did not know that they were an encouragement to dreamers; for they were always wanting to escape from them.

Sometimes the dream of life would come upon Giovanni suddenly, and at other times it was terminated because of some mundane event in life. This was always a problem for Giovanni. If the dream ended suddenly, he felt sad. He always mentioned to Chiara that the dream of life was always there and would come and go. That was the salient point of the dream. It was always on the go.

Just then, Giovanni, as the bus rolled over some pot holes, thought he should remind her of this: “The dream of life is always moving between people, but as you know there is something there that interrupts it or tries to. Something strange for whatever reason stops people from joining in, and in some cases it makes them polite. ‘No thank you I am good thanks. The dream of life is just an illusion,’ are the kind of things they say to you when you invite them to join you in the mystery. People who follow the world are accustomed to living in a mundane world . It is as if they can not leave it - and that is the problem they face. They can only exist within the world. Dreamers to them are silly people when as you know we are actually wonderful creatures out of this world.”

Chiara who was now brushing her hair was quite happy and looking forward to another day at college” I agree,” she sang.

Seeing her preening herself Giovanni asked her: “Did you know that Hildegard could dream into distant lands?”

“Who was she?”

“Well to quote her biography page: *Hildegard of Bingen, also known as the Sibyl of the Rhine, was a German Benedictine abbess and polymath active as a*

writer, composer, philosopher, mystic, visionary, and as a medical writer and practitioner during the High Middle Ages."

Chiara knew that he too could dream faraway, and would often share these visions with her. In a moment the journey came to an end. The breaks hissed, there was a jolt, then the bus driver shouted: "This is it, the last stop!"

Giovanni smiled, and as he looked out of the window to acknowledge where they were: "Well, my dear this may be the final stop, but I can assure you the dream of life will continue for those who believe in the Son of God.

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